

News Release



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Año Nuevo State Park
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SEAL ADVENTURE SATURDAY AT AÑO NUEVO STATE PARK

Travel into the sand dunes while thousands of elephant seals are on shore to rest, give birth, and mate at the spectacular Año Nuevo State Park rookery. On **Saturday, January 28, 2012**, the San Mateo Coast Natural History Association (SMCNHA), and California State Parks will host **Seal Adventure Saturday**, a special fundraising event to support educational and interpretive programs at Año Nuevo State Park and other state parks along the San Mateo coast.

For one day only, visitors will have extraordinary access to linger for an entire morning or afternoon to view the elephant seals at the peak of the breeding season. This is a rare opportunity, one that can be enjoyed by everyone—from families to avid wildlife photographers. Participants will begin their adventure with a 1 ½ mile walk over bluff trails and rolling sand dunes to the elephant seal viewing area. On the way they will be able to enjoy views of the ocean and Año Nuevo Island, observe birds and other wildlife, and hear the guttural sound of the elephant seals in the distance.

Arriving at the viewing area, they will have a memorable experience surveying the beach crowded with hundreds and hundreds of elephant seals—the males sparring among themselves and females giving birth and nursing their newly born pups. Volunteer naturalists and park staff will be available to direct you to the best viewing areas, where you can observe the elephant seals for as long as you like during your viewing time period, as well as answer questions about the seals and the park.

Before and after observing the seals, participants can explore historic ranch buildings dating back to the 19th century, visit the Año Nuevo Bookstore and Marine Education Center, and enjoy free refreshments in an old horse barn that now serves as a classroom and meeting area. Tickets for the Seal Adventure may be purchased on line for \$50/person at www.smcnha.org. The cost of the tickets is tax deductible to the fullest extent allowed by law, as a donation to SMCNHA—a 501(c)3 nonprofit that supports the state parks along the San Mateo coast. You may select tickets for either the morning (8:30-12:00) or afternoon (1:00-4:30).

Año Nuevo State Park is located on State Route 1, between Santa Cruz and Half Moon Bay, about 1.5 hours south of San Francisco.

Seal Adventure Saturday will be held rain or shine. Visitors should prepare for an outdoor hiking adventure that may include wind, rain, and cold. Recommended clothing includes hooded rain gear, layered clothing, and sturdy walking shoes. For safety reasons, umbrellas and baby strollers are not allowed.

Northern elephant seals, once hunted to the brink of extinction for their blubber, have made a large comeback along their Pacific Coast range. Elephant seals returned to Año Nuevo in the 1960s and began giving birth on the mainland beaches in 1975. Over 1,800 pups were born in the rookery last year.

Elephant seals spend much of the year at sea, diving to depths of almost one mile beneath the surface on dives that can last over one hour. Pups quadruple their weight within a month on their diet of rich mother's milk; full-grown males can reach 2.5 tons. Año Nuevo State Park is a protected place for these incredible animals and other wildlife and cultural resources.

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